

*Gibson (Wm)*

# LECTURE,

INTRODUCTORY

TO A COURSE ON

THE PRINCIPLES & PRACTICE OF

## SURGERY,

IN THE

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA,

**Delivered November 1, 1841,**

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BY WILLIAM GIBSON, M. D.

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*15578 Box 3.*

Philadelphia.

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**1841.**

*Philadelphia, the 5th Nov. 1841.*

DEAR SIR,

We the undersigned in the name of the Medical Class, which we have the honour to represent, tender you our acknowledgments for the able and instructive address, delivered to us on the 1st instant, accompanied by a unanimous and earnest solicitation, that you would add another claim to the many you already hold upon our high considerations, by furnishing us with a copy of the same for publication.

With sentiments of sincere regard, we subscribe ourselves your friends,

JOHN S. PEETE,  
W. A. BRINSON,  
W. W. SPENCER,  
C. H. DAVIS,  
E. A. CRUDUP,  
D. W. RAY.

PROFESSOR W. GIBSON.

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*Philadelphia, Nov. 5th, 1841.*

GENTLEMEN,

As representatives of the Medical Class of the University of Pennsylvania, you have been kind enough to request a copy of my Introductory Lecture—for publication. Allow me to say, that I feel highly honored by this mark of approbation, and by the flattering terms in which you have been pleased to express your sense of other claims to your consideration. Will you be so obliging as to present my sincere and affectionate regards to the class, and say how much pleasure I shall have in acceding to their wishes, and believe me to be, with great respect, truly and unalterably

Your Friend,

W. GIBSON.

TO MESSRS. JOHN S. PEETE,  
W. A. BRINSON,  
W. W. SPENCER,  
C. H. DAVIS,  
E. A. CRUDUP,  
D. W. RAY.

## INTRODUCTORY.

GENTLEMEN,

I am Teacher of the Principles and Practice of Surgery in the University of Pennsylvania. I am, as it were, one of your constituents, placed here to administer to the wants and wishes of the people I represent, whom I am bound to serve faithfully and honestly, to the best of my abilities, and to whom I am, in a measure, responsible for any dereliction of duty—so long as I continue in office. You have a right, therefore, to demand, according to usage established from time immemorial, in our great and favoured land, what those principles and practice are, and how I propose to carry out what I am pledged to execute. You have a right to enquire and to know who I am, and what I have done to entitle me to the high prerogative of being your representative, and if not satisfied with the doctrines I inculcate, and the claims I shall endeavour to substantiate, have the privilege of supporting some other candidate better calculated to secure your rights and immunities.

This being conceded, you will pardon, I am sure, any semblance of egotism, or vanity that may float on the surface of the account I propose to lay before you of ourself and our concerns. Americans are apt, we all know, to be accused of blazoning forth their pretensions, and of exhibiting in glowing colours, their claims to distinctions and honours. Their European brethren, however, by whom the charge is generally preferred, are not less prone to pursue a similar course, and are the last to conceal their accomplishments, or to put their lights under a bushel. The late Sir Astley Cooper said to me two years ago, "Why is it that all you Americans are so fond of using the word I, or of speaking of yourselves?" Because, my good Sir Astley, I replied, we are the descendants of Englishmen, and for the same reason that you, for the last two hours, have been talking so continually of yourself and improvements—so much to my own edification and advantage. With such high authority before my eyes, I may venture, I trust, to furnish an outline of auto-biography, which as it relates to yourselves, so far

as pupil and preceptor are concerned, will not under such circumstances, I fondly hope, be considered amiss.

Fifty years ago, then, I had the honor of being born in the City of Baltimore and State of Maryland, and am, therefore, like many of yourselves, a native american and a southern man. After receiving the best intellectual education Annapolis and Princeton afforded, I commenced the study of medicine, and attended, in 1806, a course of lectures in this University. Three hours after my arrival in town I heard the first public lecture I ever listened to. It was from my distinguished predecessor—the late Dr. Physick. Struck with the peculiar appearance of that extraordinary man and with the precepts he poured forth, my attention was riveted to every action he displayed and to every word that fell from his lips. I retired to my lodgings, kept by a very respectable widow lady, and mused for hours over the wonders I had seen and heard. Whilst rapt in the deepest study and completely abstracted, I was roused from my reverie by the touch of my kind landlady, at whose fireside I was sitting, and asked what I was thinking so seriously about? Almost unconsciously I replied, I am thinking of Dr. Physick and his lecture, and intend, some day or other, to occupy his place. Soon afterwards the boarders were assembled around the social meal, and after tea had been furnished to each, my kind hostess having nothing else to do, said in tones that touched me to the quick, “What do you think, Gentlemen, this young man says? he says he intends to have Dr. Physick’s place.” In vain I put forth my hands, imploringly, to stop her tongue; with relentless and mischeivous pleasure she reiterated the charge; and I had the mortification of receiving every species of home thrust that sarcastic ingenuity could invent. For weeks afterwards the roars and shouts of the table rung in my ears; and many a sly glance and curl of the lip afterwards told what the thoughts of my associates were. Vexed, however, and annoyed as I was at thus being made a target to be shot at, the idea, which so unceremoniously took possession of my soul, was never for a moment lost sight of, but haunted my dreams by night and my thoughts by day. After close of the lectures I sailed for Europe and first repaired to

Edinburgh; where I spent the summer in witnessing the private practice and operations of the celebrated John Bell, then in the zenith of his glory; in attending botanical and natural history Lectures; in devoting particular attention to hospital practice; and in replenishing my stores of classical knowledge under Adam and Dalzell and other eminent linguists of the day. For two successive winters I was deeply engaged with all the medical lectures of the University, besides those of Dugald Stewart on Moral Philosophy, Playfair on Natural Philosophy and Leslie on Mathematics. The intervening summers found me again employed in natural history and in making occasional excursions, on foot, to the romantic scenery of the Scottish highlands. After the requisite attendance I took my degree of M. D. and published a latin thesis entitled "*De forma ossium gentilitia*," which some of my fellow students translated, waggishly enough, the genteel form of the bones, and others, the bones of the Gentiles. In truth being very much at a loss what subject to write upon, all being so hacknied, it suddenly occurred to me, whilst ranging over Monro's Museum with my friend Mr. Fyfe, the celebrated Anatomist, whose assistant I was for several months, to select for my inaugural essay the forms and peculiarities of the bones of different nations, numerous specimens of which were contained in that museum. Dr. Gall at that period had published a few observations on craniology, but the science was in its infancy and seemed so little entitled to attention that I passed it over almost without notice, and confined my attention chiefly to minute description of the peculiarities of different national skulls and skeletons, and endeavoured to point out the causes of those peculiarities and differences. In fact my thesis was written partly for amusement and partly for the sake of having something to say out of the ordinary course. I was not a little astonished, therefore, to find, a year or two afterwards, that it had attracted the attention of reviewers and had been quoted by several scientific writers in England—Pritchard among the number—but more especially by the Germans on the continent of Europe; and of course felt gratified that my juvenile efforts in the way of fun and frolic, should be appreciated by older



heads and more practised hands.

From Edinburgh I started for London, but on the way sojourned, for two or three weeks, at a small watering place called Moffat, where I formed the acquaintance of the brother of Sir John Moore, late Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in Spain, and received from him such testimonials as enabled me to procure the means of witnessing in an unofficial capacity, all the important cases of gun-shot wounds and other similar injuries, which occurred at the battle of Corunna—after the arrival of the wounded men in England. Having derived full advantages from such a course of practical study, I entered as a private pupil the family of Sir Charles Bell, who then resided in London and gave private lectures throughout the year on Anatomy and Surgery. For many months I remained in this position and enjoyed ample opportunity of revelling to my heart's content in the sweets of the dissecting-room, breathing the odoriferous perfumes of the macerating tub, unravelling with my own fingers by night and by day, the intricacies of the human frame as well as of inferior animals; demonstrating for the younger pupils the parts they had dissected, assisting Sir Charles in making anatomical preparations, in casting in plaster of Paris or in wax, from natural or morbid specimens, in making water-colored drawings of remarkable anatomical or surgical objects, and in short of performing all the offices, dignified or otherwise, pertaining to such an establishment, never having felt ashamed to put my hand to any employment calculated to advance my professional knowledge, nor my broad shoulders to any task or labour, however arduous, I thought I could execute. With all these occupations I found time to witness most of the novel and important operations performed in the different London Hospitals, and to attend many of the interesting lectures of Abenethy, Cooper and others.

Three years and upwards, then, I remained in Europe, devoting myself assiduously to medical and surgical pursuits, collecting all the scarce and valuable books ancient and modern I could lay my hands upon, hunting up instruments and apparatus of every description, of the most costly materials, for private use and for class demonstrations, and,

in fact, spending a little fortune in such articles. Having accomplished all I wished, I returned home and settled in my native town; soon after joined some friends in getting up the University of Maryland; was appointed to the chair of Surgery in that Institution; engaged extensively in private practice, medical as well as surgical, but chiefly the latter, often made long journies into Maryland, Virginia and Pennsylvania to perform important and difficult operations, and during nine years encountered, perhaps, as much labour in teaching and practising my profession as usually falls to the lot of most practitioners of our country. The late war between the United States and Great Britain furnished me, also, during my residence in Baltimore, with additional opportunities of acquiring a knowledge of gun-shot wounds and other similar injuries; for being present at the battles of Bladensburg and North Point and holding a station corresponding with that of Surgeon General in the regular army, all the important cases were first submitted to my inspection, and were either attended by myself or placed by me under the care of those in whom I had confidence. From such sources I could not fail, I need hardly say, to reap an abundant harvest of experience and information.

During the whole of my sojourn in my native city I constantly said to my friends I am a great believer in destiny and feel confident that my residence here will be temporary merely; told them of the idea which had taken forcible possession of my mind whilst a student, and which never for a day had been absent from my thoughts; said I should be appointed to Dr. Physick's chair and could almost venture to tell the hour at which the appointment would be made. That hour, true to my prediction, at last arrived. The lamented Dorsey had been chosen, in place of the late Dr. Wistar, professor of Anatomy, but survived only long enough to deliver an introductory lecture. The anatomical course, as well as the surgical, was carried on by Dr. Physick. At the termination of the session, it became a question whether Dr. Physick should abandon the surgical chair, originally instituted for him, and which he had occupied fifteen years, and become a candidate for the anatomical one, or a new anatomical professor be appointed in place of Dr. Dorsey. By

advice of most of his colleagues and friends, and in accordance with his own wishes, Dr. Physick resigned the surgical chair and, without opposition of consequence, was appointed to the anatomical—a situation he afterwards filled for many years, with that usefulness and distinction to be expected from one who, whilst a pupil under the illustrious Hunter had acquired a higher reputation for theoretical and practical knowledge of Anatomy than any student in the British Metropolis. I take the greater pleasure in stating this fact, because it has sometimes been imagined, and upon one occasion was broadly insinuated by one of his biographers, that this eminent anatomist and surgeon had failed to acquit himself satisfactorily whilst an incumbent of the anatomical chair, and that it would have been better, therefore, for his reputation if he had been retained in the surgical. One reason, among others, which had a powerful influence with Dr. Physick in deciding him to give up the surgical chair and take the anatomical was this; Dr. Dorsey had published two or three years before a system of surgery made up chiefly from very full notes on Dr. Physick's surgical lectures so that when the lectures were afterwards delivered there was more or less embarrassment felt from the circumstance of the lectures being, as it were, in the hands of the students during their delivery. I mention this not to detract from the merit of Dr. Dorsey, for there was original matter enough to establish for the author high reputation as a writer and practitioner, while the substance of the work being the opinions and practice of Dr. Physick put forth in some instances, in his own language, was sufficient to stamp upon it an excellence not to be disputed and to make it what it was designed to be—considering the time it was written—a production of no ordinary value.

My appointment to Dr. Physick's chair took place in September 1819—rather more than twenty one years ago. I had immense opposition to contend with—the place being sought by some of the most eminent surgeons of the town and of the United States: Indeed a petition was signed by almost all, I believe, of the medical men of Philadelphia unconnected with the University, and presented to the trustees, remonstrating against the appointment of any one



not belonging to the city—certainly upon very untenable grounds, inasmuch as the school had, from time immemorial, been supplied with Students not chiefly from Philadelphia, but from every district in the Union and principally from the South. In consequence of my success, however—though I made very few exertions to procure the place, depending upon my destiny and the influence of my friends—a host of enemies started up against me in all directions, many of whom were determined to put me down at all hazards, by preventing me from getting practice and by interfering with my lectures. This gave me very little concern, inasmuch as I was too busily employed in preparing for my lectures to find time to attend to such affairs, and in reality felt no disposition to quarrel, since I had every reason to be satisfied with what I had gained, and could, therefore, make every allowance for those who had been disappointed. Indeed, with a single exception, I never quarrelled, or felt unkindly, towards any of my competitors, and believe that all such feelings on their part, if they ever entertained them, have long since subsided. Certainly I could never feel towards most of them any thing but respect, for they were men of talents and learning, and in every way well qualified to fill the station they sought.

My first step, after receiving the appointment, was to enquire for and seek out my old landlady—wondering if she would recollect me and my predictions. Much to my sorrow, however, I found she had departed this life some years before. But fortunately I was enabled to trace her daughter and present myself to her notice. Finding she did not recollect me I exclaimed, “Is it possible Miss Betsey you don’t remember the young Virginia doctor—for by that sobriquet all students at that period were known—who impudently told your mother he intended to have Dr. Physick’s place.” I thought she would have eaten me up with kindness, for she took hold of me, danced about the room like a girl of fifteen, looked into my face again and again to see if she could trace any former resemblance, asked innumerable questions about where I had been, what I had been doing, and having satisfied her curiosity and gotten over her

astonishment, began to calculate how long it had been since I had prophesied to her mother, and made it out just thirteen years—exclaiming at the same time “dear me and is it so, and I wonder how you could know that it would be so, but maybe you did not know but only guessed, as you were always so full of your mischief and liked so well to tease us all.”

While I held the professorship in Baltimore I had ample opportunities of collecting from my extensive practice, and from the Hospital and Almshouse, both of which I attended for a long time, many valuable morbid specimens. Besides this I worked very diligently at wax preparations, an art I first acquired some knowledge of from Sir Charles Bell, afterwards obtained additional information on from Chiappi a celebrated artist of Ancona in Italy, who had worked under Scarpa and undoubtedly understood his business better than any one who had ever before been in this country. By my own exertions and experiments, also, I found out many things I could not obtain from Chiappi, who, like most artists of the kind, kept the most delicate and important processes secret. All these preparations—with exception of a figure of full size, executed by myself, representing a ruptured Uterus and still preserved in the University of Maryland—together with a few I had purchased from Chiappi, I brought with me to Philadelphia, and have since been continually adding to them, so that my cabinet contains a greater number, perhaps, than are to be found in the whole United States and of much better description, for none have changed colour in the slightest degree, whereas all those I have met with manufactured in this country, from want of knowledge, on the part of the artists, of the proper composition of the wax, have nearly been ruined in a few years, by the wax returning to its original yellow colour. Besides wax and wet and dried preparations in which my cabinet abounds, sufficient to illustrate all the diseases I have occasion to describe, I have long been accustomed to exhibit oil pictures upon a gigantic scale, so that at the distance of forty or fifty feet the objects represented appear of the natural size, and are so delineated and coloured as to produce the strongest effect upon all by whom they are seen. What student, indeed without such

assistance can acquire the slightest knowledge of the diseases of the eye, merely from hearing them described in a class room, or from seeing a few preparations, the size of a hickory nut, held up and shown to those twenty feet off? Who can know any thing of Hernia or Lithotomy merely from seeing, or rather hearing, a demonstration on the natural subject—instead of such demonstration being conjoined with a magnified drawing of the parts? Now all these plans are peculiarly my own. They were never attempted in this country, or in Europe, before they were displayed by myself. They are now, partially, used in other schools, but can never be rendered very serviceable there until the professors are willing to lay out large sums to purchase them, until they collect them in great numbers, and have them executed by such artists as understand their business and are willing, which few of them are—owing to a natural repugnance on the part of those not belonging to the profession, to draw from nature, or diseased subjects—to devote themselves to such employment.

Almost immediately after removing to Philadelphia, I was elected Surgeon to one of the largest Hospitals in the United States, connected with an institution for paupers, and known under the common name of Alms-house. The building containing these paupers was then situated in a central part of the city, was of immense size, and from the number of poor constantly residing within its walls, ample contributions were furnished, in the shape of patients, to the surgical and medical wards. It was impossible, I soon discovered, for pupils attending the institution to derive much benefit from merely parading through the house and hearing an occasional remark at the bed-side, from some physician or surgeon, unaccustomed, perhaps, to lecture, or uninterested in teaching, and that a great deal must, therefore, be lost, which if properly brought forward and presented to a class assembled together, would prove available to the pupil, to the teacher, and to the patient himself. Influenced by these considerations, I at once struck out the novel plan of selecting patients according to their disease, conveying them on beds, or otherwise, to the operating theatre, and there, in presence of the pupils, giving a lecture on the

disease, illustrated by the peculiarities of each case presented to their view, laying down the treatment in a very clear, simple and tangible way, and if necessary, performing operations, after having explained the necessity for and mode of executing them. This plan, so obviously efficient, yet never before carried into practice in this country, or in Europe, was readily adopted by my medical friends and colleagues, and has been, ever since, a leading feature of the clinical instruction of the same hospital, and is now becoming very general in similar institutions throughout the United States. Some eight or ten years ago this almshouse was pulled down and a magnificent institution, larger, it is said, than any in the world except one at St. Petersburg in Russia, erected over Schuylkill—about a mile and a half from the University. So struck was Miss Martineau, the celebrated traveller, with its noble architecture, lofty rooms, spacious wards and convenient arrangements for all purposes that she instantly exclaimed “a palace for paupers!” and added “as soon as my poor countrymen find out that such a structure has been reared in America for the comfort and support of the destitute and helpless they will cross the Atlantic in shoals to become its tenants.” The medical part of this institution has, within the last two or three years, been denominated the *Philadelphia Hospital* and under this appellation is well known to many of you; for there you have been accustomed to listen to the clinical lectures delivered and to witness the operations performed by those members of our University appointed to the task. For more than twenty years I have been the chief surgeon to the former and to the present hospital, have delivered an equal number of clinical courses, and during that time have performed as many capital operations as any hospital surgeon, perhaps, in the United States—owing to the hospital being more than twice the size of any other in the country and to my having had, always, charge of the wards during the winter months, when the patients are most numerous and the cases most interesting. Within the last eighteen months, however, my colleagues and myself have consented to relinquish one half of our wards in favour of other schools of the city, not wishing to monopolize privileges which others for a long



time have been anxious to enjoy conjointly with ourselves.

But there is reason to believe that this subdivision of the wards will lead to more or less difficulty, by interfering with the facility of picking out the most interesting cases and of presenting them to the class, besides curtailing the number of operations. Last winter much confusion was created by this new arrangement, and by the mismanagement of some of the hospital directors, so that the students were deprived, upon several occasions, of their just rights and privileges. This winter we have the promise of a better state of things, from managers having been appointed to superintend the arrangements, who, from their former experience, intelligence and activity, will be able, I feel confident, to put things upon a better footing and secure to the class every possible comfort in going to and returning from the hospital and every accommodation while there. Under any circumstances, however, it is proper you should understand, that neither myself as surgeon of the house and teacher of clinical surgery, nor my colleagues in the medical department can hold ourselves responsible for any thing that may occur out of our wards and operating theatre, that our services are and always have been gratuitous merely, and that nothing short of the interest we take in the welfare of our pupils, could have induced us to remain so long attached to the house, as most of us have been; and to have gone through the labour and drudgery we have all experienced for so many years.

And now, Gentlemen, you will perceive, from the short history I have presumed to furnish, that I have been for thirty years engaged in lecturing upon the principles and practice of surgery, first in the University of Maryland and next in the University of Pennsylvania as the successor of the late Dr. Physick, to whose hands and my own has the chair, so far, been only entrusted; that for the same number of years I have had charge of one or more hospitals, where I have constantly delivered clinical lectures and performed the most intricate and difficult operations; that I have devoted myself, assiduously to the formation of a Surgical Cabinet, the most extensive, undoubtedly, in the United States and not inferior to some of the best in Europe; that I have had for the best part of my life an extensive private practice



and have enjoyed from European education and the advantages obtained there theoretically and practically, and from collecting all forms of instruments and apparatus calculated to illustrate lectures, opportunities which few, if any, americans can boast of.

Let me assure you most solemnly, that I do not make these statements for display, or to enhance my own importance in your estimation. So far from it I would willingly have shrunk from the task of even doing myself justice. But the times are portentous of evil, and quackery, in one shape or other, is overrunning the land, so that the strangest fabrications are afloat calculated to dazzle or blind the most intelligent minds; assertions bearing all the stamp of certainty upon their front are boldly and unhesitatingly made, which if not as peremptorily denied are likely to be received as truths, by those who would be as willing themselves to

“Distort the truth, accumulate the lie,  
And pile the pyramid of calumny.”

My object, then, from beginning to end of this discourse, has been to speak for myself, well knowing that now-a-days, every man must do that, or not be spoken for at all, and like John Randolph's butter, must be old enough and strong enough to take his own part. “Johnny,” said a pedagogue, “you have always been the best boy in my school, and never told me a lie in your life, come then, my little man, speak out, and let me know who threw that pound of butter against the wall, for not one of those big fellows will say a word.” “You had better,” said Johnny, “ask the butter, it is old enough to speak for itself.” Now you will meet with many, no doubt, disposed to represent me as old, “stale, flat and unprofitable” as that butter. Be this as it may, however, one thing is certain—that I never intend, if speaking for myself can prevent it, “to go to the wall.”

In truth, gentlemen, age, to a certain extent, is relative merely; for many a man at thirty is older in constitution, and weaker in mind and body than another at sixty; so much so, that if one or more professors you may have seen in this city or elsewhere, were placed at one end of a pole and

myself at the other, you could form some tolerable idea, from appearance, which would be most likely to have the best of the tug or pull. I say this, of course, in mere playfulness ; nevertheless it may serve as a sufficient answer to the common slang of the day—that a man of fifty is antiquated in his notions and practice, and unwilling or unfit to teach recent improvements or novelties. If any other argument were required to combat so preposterous an idea, it would only be necessary to say that experience proves the contrary, by showing that men of eminence, all over the world, even after they have attained advanced age, have kept pace with improvements, and even made important discoveries, as is abundantly shown by the writings of Abernethy, Sir Astley Cooper, Samuel Cooper, Sir Charles Bell, Sabatier, Boyer, Baron Larrey, Roux, Dupuytren, Scarpa, Physick, and a thousand more, from the earliest periods down to the present time. For my own part, I may say, with Byron,

“ My hair is gray, but not with years,  
Nor grew it white  
In a single night,  
As men’s have grown from sudden fears;”

and will only add, that you will meet with no antiquated, unestablished, doctrines and practice in my course, no histories of disease or operations unfounded in fact; no tedious detail of exploits whose only merit is their novelty; but such plain, unvarnished statements as have received the sanction of the ablest men of our profession in every country and in every age; statements which never can become antiquated, but are as fixed and immutable as the laws of the Medes and the Persians, and as such must be handed down from generation to generation, unchanged and unchangeable, as true and incontrovertible as holy writ.

After these preliminary remarks, which might have been extended to a much greater length, I shall endeavour to show in a very clear and brief way, what surgery is ; how it is connected with medicine and other collateral branches; how a teacher should proceed in order to make his pupils acquainted with it; the course those pupils should pursue to benefit by what they may see and hear, and the advantages

every medical institution should possess to render it desirable for those who intend to graduate and practise their profession in our country.

If we were to restrict the meaning of the word surgery to mere etymological import, its scope and bearing would be limited in the extreme, for nothing more would be implied than the art of curing disease by manual operation. In this sense, unfortunately, it was so considered for ages, and consequently was so degraded as to be practised only by the most illiterate persons, whose sole merit consisted in a set of supple fingers, more or less intrepidity and a perfect willingness to perform the most menial offices under the superintendence of physicians, who were either too dignified to stoop to such occupations, or too conscious of their own inability to attempt the necessary exploits. But those practices have long since been exploded, and so far from the word surgery being considered—notwithstanding its derivation—in the light of a mere mechanical employment, like watch-making or any similar handicraft, it has assumed the high and dignified attitude of a science, as well as art, and in this respect is upon a par with natural philosophy, chemistry, mathematics and any other of the kindred branches to which the inductive system of philosophy can be applied. Like many of these branches, moreover, it is susceptible of being divided into theoretical and practical departments. Hence the terms institutes and practice of surgery, medical and operative surgery, which, taken collectively, embrace a very extensive range and are so intertwined with physiology, pathology and therapeutics, so associated with anatomy, materia medica, obstetrics and the practice of medicine, as to constitute a most important link in the chain of all these several departments. If this be a correct view of the subject, it must be evident that no man can pretend to be an accomplished surgeon who is merely an operator, who has merely taken up some specialty such as the diseases of the eye, ear, or teeth and studied them closely, to the exclusion of other branches. In truth, there are no defined or natural limits between one department of the profession and another, they run into and are insensibly fused with each other in such a way as not to be separated. The same laws

that govern the operations of the animal economy in health and in disease, extend their influence over every part of the system, contribute to the production of local complaints, as well as constitutional, and are not less active in restoring parts injured, or worn by disease. Is it not absurd, therefore, to talk of external and internal disease, and to say that one belongs to surgery and the other to medicine, when it must be obvious, upon the slightest reflection, that some of the most important internal diseases belong to the surgeon and by him only can be cured? Fractures are treated by him as well as luxations, and yet are the bones and joints not nourished like other parts? Are they not internal? Is strangulated hernia not an internal disease, as well as stone in the bladder? Are the pathological effects upon the intestines and kidneys and ureters and bladder from such complaints less interesting and important to the surgeon than the physician? Are there not hundreds of instances of a similar kind, and if so, is it not irresistibly ridiculous to talk of limiting surgery to external injury and disease, when such effects pervade every part of the human system from the most sensitive to the most insensible? A late eminent writer endeavours to draw the line of demarcation, so far as it can be done, between surgery and medicine by stating—that surgery properly includes all injuries whether external or internal, all local and external diseases, all internal complaints that give rise to external changes whether in the shape of tumour, change of consistence or colour, and all cases requiring operations, local applications or dressings of any description. This, no doubt, is a very plain and sensible way of disposing of a question which from time immemorial has been arbitrary and embarrassing, and if the two professions—for the sake of the convenience of those who practice them, and to gratify the notions of those who are to be practised upon—are still to be separated and considered distinct, will answer, probably, as good a purpose in affixing limits to what, in reality, are inseparable, as any attempt hitherto made. And yet how many exceptions could be brought forward and how many objections started to such arrangements—plausible and satisfactory as they appear! The truth



is, Gentlemen, there are very few, if any, real distinctions between medicine and surgery, and the man who is well qualified to practice medical and operative surgery is equally able to take charge of all the complaints that usually fall to the lot of the mere physician. But there are many disqualified by nature to practice operative surgery, who must, therefore, restrict themselves to such limits as suit their temperaments and abilities. For the most part, these will naturally embrace such departments as require the least energy and are least revolting to sensitive, nervous and timid characters; and as these form, in most parts of the world, a large proportion of the human family, so physicians will be, every where, more numerous than surgeons. Hence we find, in our own country especially, a great number of medical men who are entirely averse to surgery in its usual acceptation, and who confine themselves almost exclusively to a routine practice of ordinary diseases, embracing all the forms of fever, inflammation &c. But this is not the case with European physicians, or at least to the same extent, whose practice is comparatively limited, owing to the large share of medical surgery which falls to the lot of the European surgeon; who, in fact, besides being engaged fully in the duties of the surgeon, strictly so called, is not less employed in the treatment of medical disease. So that the European surgeon is engaged, generally, in all the duties usually embraced by the physician in the United States, with the additional burthen and responsibility of operative surgery upon his shoulders. One reason, among others, of this state of things, is the comparative frequency of surgical complaints in Europe; for there, owing to the dense population, the abject poverty and wretchedness of the lower orders, many diseases are generated which we do not meet with here, and others induced which from not being attended to in their incipency, are suffered to grow worse and worse, and at last when they fall under the care of the surgeon, are in such exasperated condition as to require, imperatively, an operation. Indeed the actual amount of surgical disease strictly so called, is very limited in the United States and on the American continent, so much so that there is very little room for the exercise of the profession as a *specialty*, and still less, of



course, for the division of the profession into numerous specialties, which has been attempted within the last few years, in imitation of Europeans. To show the folly of such attempts, however, it need only be mentioned that the most eminent of the English, French and continental surgeons have lately declared that the profession, with them, is in a fair way of being ruined by the endless division and subdivision of professional labour. So sensible indeed, are they of the mischief resulting from the practice, that not a few of them declared to me, two years ago, their willingness to follow the American system of combining medicine with surgery, and even to go back to the system of antiquity, and like Hippocrates, Galen and Celsus, place all the branches of the science and art under the control of an individual practitioner. And yet we ourselves are now in a fair way of reversing the good old system by which we have profited for the last hundred years, and of falling into the very errors committed by our European brethren—which they so much lament, and are so anxious to repair. There cannot be a stronger proof of the correctness of the opinion I have just expressed, than by calling to mind what has been the fate of every surgeon in the United States who has attempted a specialty. For a few months he has acquired a reputation for skill in the treatment of some particular disease, and patients have flocked to him from all quarters. Other practitioners allured by his apparent success have followed suit and engaged in the same vocation, until the cases have been frittered away to almost nothing, and in the end have ceased to be worth the attention of a single individual. All this is more speedily brought about than it otherwise would be, by the stupidity and ignorance of patients and the public, who are very prone to believe that if a man excel his fellow men in any one line of business, it is almost impossible for him to know any thing else.

I am thus led back to the proposition with which I started—that medical and operative surgery are intertwined; that there is no natural division between even surgery and medicine, and that to understand one it is necessary to understand both, whether practised separately or conjointly. And here let me take the opportunity to descant upon that

feeling so prevalent among young surgeons all over the world, to push their way to eminence by bold and bloody exploits with the knife, not the result of intellectual endowment or exertion, in most instances, but of unconquerable desire to gratify destructive propensities, and to estimate every resource in proportion to the facility with which they can place it at their fingers' ends. That some have succeeded, for a time, in gaining reputation by such exploits there can be no doubt, but that the greater number have signally failed, after the lapse of a few months, or years, in sustaining themselves in a position to which they were incompetent, is equally true ; for even the public, ignorant as it is, in most matters pertaining to our profession, will soon be disposed to look upon such a character as a mere mechanical contriver, a sort of handicraftsman, whose sharp eye and supple fingers, and whose nimble movements of body, arms and legs are to serve in the place of intellect, and to enable him, through the medium of such qualities as every posture maker, rope dancer and circus rider is supposed to possess in the highest perfection, to meet all those exigencies, difficulties and accidents to which every community is more or less exposed, and to investigate those organic diseases and functional derangements, depending upon such various causes, such intricate and too often inexplicable associations, referable to the vascular or nervous systems, or closely connected with the subservient organs—the stomach, bowels, liver, spleen, glands, or different organs of sense.

That intelligent and able surgeons, themselves, have sometimes contributed to degrade the profession, through sordid motives, or from the vain and ostentatious desire of exhibiting their feats of dexterity and slight of hand before a vulgar and unprofessional congregation, or from a disposition to overrate the value of their services to the patient or his friends, or for the purpose of establishing a claim to distinction, or to entice students from a distance, by misrepresentations and weekly reports through the columns of a newspaper, there cannot be the slightest doubt. So common, indeed, has this pruriency for surgical distinction now become, through the medium of cutting and slashing, that every "puny whipster," with strength enough to steady a knife, or

brains enough to pull a tooth, thinks he must boldly dash at an operation that would have caused a Hunter or a Physick to pause and reflect upon the consequences of such a proceeding. Hardly a week indeed passes that we do not hear of some bloody exploit that would disgrace a mountebank; of some tomahawk scalping that the meanest butcher boy would be ashamed of. Day after day do we find it stated in newspaper paragraphs and puffs, that such a surgeon has cut out a man's liver, cleaned, and put it back again, that another has taken away the old brain and made a new one out of some other material, and a thousand other extravagances of similar cast; for all which the imposter who thus bamboozles the public is rewarded by a certificate from some man of distinction, or some booby of a patient, which certificate is next blazoned forth in the same or other papers, and will thus go the rounds from one end of the country to the other, serving the purposes of the trickster, by enabling him to commit further depredations upon the profession and the public.

Is it to be wondered at, then, when such expedients are resorted to, to obtain patients and get eclat by operations, in some instances, by men who have held respectable rank and have even made fortunes out of the profession; when the surgeon is so fearful of a patient escaping from his fangs, or of falling into other hands, that he whips a knife into him, unceremoniously, the instant he sees him and before the patient is aware of his intention so to do, and when, perhaps, he never dreamed of an operation being necessary, or, if necessary, had not made up his mind to submit to it; I ask if it is to be wondered at that surgery should be looked upon as a horrid trade, carried on by a merciless set of men, who have no regard for human life or human suffering, provided they can gain eclat, or profit, by brilliant and bloody exploits, and establish for themselves the reputation of bold, flourishing and dashing operators?

That I have not exaggerated this picture, and that the scenes it portrays are not peculiar to our own country, I might refer to similar complaints, urged by distinguished Europeans against their own countrymen. "Now, says Sir Charles Bell, we are all anatomists and operators, and for

mere vacancy of ideas and lack of something better, operations are invented and we have eclat for them in proportion as they are protracted, deep and bloody." But there would be no end to the extent and variety of such extracts, if I were to indulge in laying them before you, all bearing upon the folly and wickedness of those who in the most unprincipled and shameless manner violate the holy precept—"do as you would wish to be done by."

Of surgery, as it is really understood by a few, and ought to be understood by all, I hope to teach you something better than ever can be learned from the advocates and champions of the knife and saw. I hope to teach you that surgery, as a science, is founded upon principles not less certain than those which govern other departments of our profession; that, in many instances, these principles are as clear and self-evident and susceptible of demonstration as any proposition in Euclid. I hope to teach you that medical, not operative surgery, should be your chief aim, that you will be able, by patience, industry and perseverance, to cure many a complaint, and save many a limb and many a life by judicious treatment, through the medium of medicine and by a proper understanding of the functions of the various organs, their various sympathies or associations, and in short, by your knowledge of medicine, in conjunction with surgery, than by the aid of the best instruments ever manufactured by a cutler, or by the most supple fingers ever appended to the arms of a human being. I hope to teach you, at the same time, the true use and value of *operative* surgery, by proving to you its subserviency to medical surgery, by showing you the cases in which the knife is indispensably necessary; how operations, when required, should be performed, and above all to *convince* you that whilst I despise the mere *cutter* as one of the humblest and meanest of God's creatures, I have the highest respect and veneration for the man who, with a mind imbued with the profoundest knowledge of his profession, as shown by a general acquaintance with all its branches, can boldly and unnervingly, and with matchless dexterity, plan and execute, successfully, operations which the mere professional mechanic would shrink from with apprehension



and dismay, or be totally unable to comprehend ; thereby demonstrating that it is the *combination* of medical and operative talent that constitutes the prerogative of the great surgeon, and makes him a blessing to mankind—in accordance with the views of one who, if he had lived to the present day, would have attained as high a rank and “won as haught a crest,” in all the departments of the profession towards which, he might have directed his original and powerful mind, as any american who has ever graced the annals of his country. I allude to one born on the shores of the Chesapeake, in my own native state. I allude to the lamented Godman, who amidst various occupations, and whilst heavily pressed by the hand of disease, was enabled to draw the following parallel that would do honour to the head and heart of any individual of any country or of any age.

“The difference, says he, between a surgeon and a *mere* operator may be estimated by contrasting them. The *surgeon* inquires into the causes and removes the consequences of constitutional and local disease ; the *operator* inquires into the willingness of his patient to submit, and resorts to the knife. The *surgeon* relies on the restoration of the healthy actions by regimen and medicine ; the *operator* relies on *himself* and cuts off the diseased part. The *surgeon*, reflecting on the comforts and feelings of his patient, uniformly endeavours to save him from pain and deformity ; the *operator* considers his own immediate advantage, and the notoriety he may acquire, regardless of other considerations. The *surgeon* reluctantly decides on the employment of instruments ; the *operator* delays no longer than to give his knife a keen edge. The *surgeon* is governed by the principles of the science ; the *operator*, most generally, by the principle of interest ; one is distinguished by the numbers he has saved from mutilation and restored to usefulness ; the other by the number of cripples he has successfully made. The *surgeon* is an honor to his profession and a benefactor of mankind : The *mere operator* renders the profession odious, and is one of the greatest curses to which mankind, among their manifold miseries, are exposed.”

From the whole scope of these observations, then, you will perceive that I set a high value upon medical surgery ;



that I estimate as they deserve the principles which regulate that department of our science ; that I look upon operative surgery as secondary and subordinate in its aim and application, and only to be resorted to after full and fair trials of other remedial measures have failed to alleviate the disease, or accomplish a cure—instead of being held up, as it too often is, as a consideration of primary importance, and even, upon most occasions, as a *sine qua non* itself.

Influenced by such views I published, many years ago, a work on the institutes and practice of surgery—intended as a guide or text book for those who were to follow my lectures. The sixth edition of this work, comprising two large, closely printed volumes, full of plates, containing a summary of the views and practice of the latest and best European and American authorities, has just issued from the press. It is now and always has been, an indispensable accompaniment to my course, inasmuch as I follow the exact order of the subjects as there laid down. No European work, have I met with calculated to answer the same purpose, some being too diffuse and copious in detail to be read over by the student either before or after each lecture, and others so meagre and imperfect, so defective in arrangement, independently of the views and practice inculcated being, in many instances, at variance with american notions or systems of practice, as to render them unfit, as text books, for american students—however useful some of them may prove as works of reference, or for general reading, after they engage in practice, or have ample leisure for their perusal or study.

My plan, then, is to commence with the principles of surgery, to proceed, gradatim, with the simple elements or rudiments of the science, to unfold, step by step, each leading and essential fundamental character, and having rendered these as clear and comprehensive as possible, to advance to the complicated and abstruse doctrines and practice of the profession, and to illustrate them by magnified drawings, models of natural and diseased parts, and morbid specimens belonging to my own surgical cabinet, or to the Wistar Museum, as cannot fail, I trust, to prove satisfactory to every member of the class—especially as pains will be taken after

each demonstration of parts and of their pathology, to show on the dead subject, by imitation of the disease, every operation of importance it may become necessary to perform. It is proper to state that this last method of exhibiting operations, by forming the disease on the dead subject, belongs exclusively to myself, having originated with me more than twenty-five years ago; that it has received the sanction of the most eminent teachers abroad, and been very generally adopted in this country of late years—though few of my countrymen, I am sorry to say, have the candour to acknowledge whence they obtained a plan so essential to their success.

It may not be amiss, after the views I have presented of surgery and its relations, to notice briefly, some of the advantages a medical school should possess to make it an object with students to select it for the commencement and completion of their medical education. Such a question might admit of considerable range of discussion, or be amplified beyond measure, but may be answered, I think, satisfactorily, in the following way.

In the first place, every institution of the kind should possess more or less antiquity—for the very circumstance of its having endured for a great length of time, and of still retaining its celebrity, is a proof of its affairs having been well conducted, and of its having enjoyed the confidence of the public. Such continued celebrity, moreover, naturally leads to patronage and to prosperity, for in proportion as talent and services are rewarded, or otherwise, will there be facility or difficulty in prevailing upon eminent men to become candidates for professorships—so that celebrated teachers may be attracted from any portion of an extensive country by the prospect of gaining additional celebrity, and by the certainty of improving their fortunes, when they would not accept of professorships in schools of inferior reputation. Hence the chairs in an ancient and well endowed, and firmly established university, are sure to be filled by the most able and eminent men a whole country can produce; and experience proves that professors in neighbouring, or distant schools, are always willing to aban-

don them the moment they can obtain situations in those of higher standing and repute. On this account, the Universities of Glasgow, Aberdeen and St. Andrews have never flourished to any extent as medical institutions, for the moment a teacher of distinguished talent appeared in them, he was sure to be called away and appropriated to the University of Edinburgh—which like a stupendous mountain, still lifts its towering head to the stars, far out of sight, hearing and reach of the numerous hillocks that surround its base. And so it will be always, in this and every other country—the recent and minor schools will serve but as feeders to the old and established ones. And I am not sure but this is as it should be; for I need hardly remark, that no man however great his native talent, or varied and extensive his information, can instantaneously become an eloquent and successful lecturer. Like the unbroken colt, he must be mouthed and bitted, and carefully handled, and gently patted and moved slowly without whip or spur, till familiar grown with all about him, he will suffer his long tail and shaggy mane to be pulled and combed, and his rough hide to be curried and smoothed, and when thus trained will be fit for the chase or the shafts, and grace any stall in which he may be placed. In other words, judging from what I have seen, no man is fit to give any thing like a satisfactory course until he has lectured for eight or ten years; for there are many notions which by that time he will lay aside, many modes of practice he will abandon, and many things which he ought to learn himself before he can prove competent to teach them to others; and I have no doubt if professors would be candid, they would say that their early efforts at lecturing were perfect nudities and crudities, such as they themselves would not tolerate for a moment or would be ashamed of during their years of maturity, or after they have arrived at the proper modes of making known to others what they have taken a long time to find out themselves. For my own part I do not hesitate to avow, that I am fully persuaded I should cut a very sorry figure before such a class as this if I were to repeat the lectures I delivered the first eight years after my appointment to a surgical chair; not that I did not furnish my pupils with an ample supply of matter, but on

the contrary, that I gave them a vast amount of very little use to them, inasmuch as I naturally wished to show myself very learned, and to reach the bottom of every subject I had occasion to touch—instead of throwing away, as I now do, the rubbish, and dwelling upon cardinal points of the course, such as every man of any judgment at all must find out sooner or later, to be the only efficient way of communicating sound and substantial information.

Independently of such considerations, a college of long established reputation necessarily sheds more or less of its own lustre upon every pupil that enters its walls, or graduates under its auspices, and from being itself well known to the public is almost a sure pledge of the good conduct and qualifications of those that have been reared under its fostering care. Hence in a country like ours where knowledge is so generally diffused it would be necessarily a safe passport and guarantee to any student to have graduated in an ancient and well known institution, and of comparatively little benefit to him to have received the same privilege from any other institution of a different cast. Some may possibly imagine that patients will never take the trouble to enquire where a man graduated, or if he has graduated in an inferior school, it will never be found out. Experience proves the reverse, by showing that practitioners of high pretensions, who have themselves graduated in schools of established reputation, are always jealous of their rights and will take sufficient care to trumpet forth the real standing of those who settle near them as rivals. But many intelligent, but diffident and nervous young men are deterred from entering the walls of long established institutions under the idea of the examinations being so rigid as to render it very difficult for them to obtain a diploma. This, however, is a great mistake, for as much experience is required to examine a pupil as to lecture to him, and the man who has been accustomed to examine thousands acquires a facility of putting his questions, and propounds them in so simple and plain a form as cannot fail to make them intelligible to the most humble capacity; whereas a professor little accustomed to lecture or examine, is often so doubtful himself of the meaning of what he asks, as to render his



examination confused and obscure, and instead of assisting the pupil and leading him to a correct reply, is more apt to embarrass and cause him to answer wrong. The truth is, no man was ever rejected, I am firmly persuaded, in a medical school composed of high minded, honourable men, who did not deserve it; but many have passed whose qualifications were not of the highest order, owing to their having been taken on subjects they happened best to understand; so that the chance is generally in favour of the pupil rather than against him. Again, as examinations are now conducted, with us at least, there is no possibility of a pupil being rejected who is at all acquainted with his subject, for if he chooses, there is no necessity for making known his intention of coming forward, but having privately determined so to do, he pays a visit to the professor's house, is received in his private study, and undergoes examination under circumstances where there can be no embarrassment; for the whole deportment of his examiner is kind and soothing in the extreme, inasmuch as no gentleman or man of honour would treat another in his own house with rudeness and severity, and especially as his feelings naturally incline him to make allowance for youth and inexperience, and to go with the pupil rather than against him—there being, in fact, no possibility of prejudice or ill will, on the part of the professor, operating to his disadvantage, as many erroneously suppose, but on the contrary, such feelings, if they happened to exist, would not only be repressed, but would cause the person possessing them to take a very liberal course, rather than incur even the suspicion of being unjust or influenced by improper considerations. But if the pupil should happen not to give satisfaction at his first private examination, he is not considered rejected; so far from it, he is permitted to come forward again, and to have other trials, and in this way may redeem his credit and pass through the whole ordeal unscathed—as has been the case innumerable times. Can any intelligent respectable student wish or expect more?

Another advantage possessed by a school venerable for its antiquity is, that every professor, from the very incipien-  
cy of the institution, will naturally, for the sake of his own



reputation, and for the benefit of his pupils, provide materials for the illustration of his lectures. These, in time, increase and multiply, and in the course of years amount in many instances, to a vast collection of inestimable value, such as could not be purchased at any price, and which, upon the death or resignation of the owner almost invariably continues with the college to which he belonged. His successor reaps the benefit of this collection, from the moment he commences his labours, and in his turn adds to the stock of material on hand, and in like manner, after running his own career, perhaps during a long series of years, leaves a vast amount of similar treasure in the lap of his beloved institution—"sic unda supervenit undam."

Again, for pupils to derive full benefit from extensive and numerous courses of medical lectures, there must be ample space and full accommodation, both for their own convenience and comfort, and for the display of the various manipulations, illustrations and operations submitted to their view. The rooms should be large, numerous, lofty, well ventilated, light, capable of being heated or cooled at short notice, and the seats so arranged as not only to afford ample space for ingress and egress, but placed at such elevations as to command a full and accurate view of the teacher and the subjects of his lecture, from whatever points they may be surveyed.

But the most essential requisite of a first rate medical school is the number and qualifications of its professors. *Ars longa, vita brevis*, is the well known apothegm of the Coan sage; in other words, the natural period of man's existence is too limited, and his intellectual powers too weak and circumscribed to enable him to fathom at once, and by his own unaided efforts, any of the mysteries that a wise and bountiful creator has shrouded from his view. Hence in all ages and in all countries where science has been taught, it has been customary to divide and subdivide labour into an infinite number of departments, each so diversified and varied, and so separated by natural or artificial boundaries, as even then to require the highest efforts of created intelligence to unravel its complexities, and to present truth in all its purity and nakedness, unsullied by a

single stain of doubt and uncertainty. But it is possible, on the other hand, that the minute subdivision of professional labour may be carried to excess, or amount to mere scholastic refinement or imaginary distinction. This, there is reason to believe, is already more or less the case in many of the German universities and French medical associations, where professors are multiplied to an indefinite and ridiculous extent.

To obviate any difficulty of this kind a limited number of men should be selected, well qualified by nature and education for each important department of the science. I say by nature; for it is well known however bright the intellect may be, and however varied and substantial the information of individuals, that they are often totally disqualified by physical organization and other causes, from communicating information to others, and that no labour on their part, will ever enable them to become fluent speakers or to present their ideas in a form of simplicity and order, so indispensable to the understanding of any subject however trifling and unimportant it may be. On the other hand, we meet, occasionally with men whose native intellect is so vigorous and unbounded, whose conceptions are so quick, clear and expanded, whose attainments so extensive and varied, whose tact and felicity of presenting every thing they touch so striking and comprehensive, whose taste so exquisite and discriminating, that, in spite of physical defects and apparent incongruities, they produce the most powerful results, and stamp on the minds of the hearers, impressions which never can be altered or effaced; so much so, that in a few hours, or days, we forget their peculiarities, understand them perfectly, and are lost in admiration of their stupendous powers, the sublimity of their genius, and the extent of their learning and professional qualifications.

But to constitute an able and successful lecturer, in the common acceptation of the term, in any department of medical science, there should be from nature, an easy, quiet and composed demeanour, a simplicity of thought and action devoid of all affectation, a manner free from embarrassment of every description, a clear and distinct enunciation, a voice sufficiently powerful to reach the most distant hearers, sus-

ceptible of modulation, marked by peculiar intonation, so regulated in its cadence as never to terminate abruptly, and with great capability of emphasis, whenever the necessity for such power may be called in requisition. If to these natural attributes be joined good common sense, steadiness of purpose, a laudable ambition to excel, a natural love or turn for the subject to be taught, that will cause the bosom of the speaker to glow with enthusiasm and enable him to rouse and keep alive the attention of his hearers and fix it upon important points which he wishes to imprint indelibly upon the memory, while he descants soberly and quietly, and in the plainest possible style of elocution upon common place topics; if I repeat, to these natural qualifications there be added intimate acquaintance with the best authorities of the profession, ancient and modern, a profound knowledge of the subject, the result of experience or personal observation, associated with the power, rarely possessed, of separating the useful from the useless, of winnowing the chaff from the grain, joined to peculiar tact in presenting in the most palatable, but most solid and simple form every intellectual viand, garnished by the dainties that a liberal education can always throw around, such qualifications are sure to be followed by success, and will, in every possible way, richly deserve it.

I have used the words experience or personal observation, and as these terms are often misunderstood or misapplied in reference to medical men, they may require some explanation. It is but too common, I am aware, in all countries, for medical men, holding the situation of professors or lecturers, to be destitute of practical skill, or the opportunity of acquiring it, either publicly or privately. How they can reconcile it to themselves, under such circumstances, to expound and lay down the law, *ex cathedra*, where the life of a human being is at stake, and may possibly be the forfeit of their guess work, or mere speculation or theoretical admonitions, is not easily to be conceived. However there is a case of different description where medical men are sometimes accused of want of experience and are very undeserving of the censure. A medical man receives, for example, an appointment to a professorship, and wishing to devote

himself, particularly, to the branch he is deputed to teach, declines in future to take an active part in the general duties of the profession; or he may abandon, entirely, one or more of the collateral branches and confine his attention, chiefly, to a single branch—to obstetrics, to the practice of medicine, to surgery, or any other he may choose to select. He confines himself, for instance to obstetrics, and is so fully occupied with the duties it enjoins, as to have no leisure for the other departments. Can it be said, under these circumstances, that he has no practice, or that he wants experience, simply because he has ceased to be a practitioner of medicine, when it is well known he still has extensive practice in obstetrics—a branch, it is his business to teach and not the practice of medicine? Upon the same principle it might be said that a professor of chemistry could not, possibly, understand *his* branch, or have experience in chemistry, because not equally well acquainted with all the other branches, or that the professor of practice should, in order to have experience, necessarily understand, minutely and circumstantially, surgery. What, it might be asked, upon such principles, would become of the professional reputation of half of the eminent surgeons and physicians in the world?

I fear I have already detained you too long. To return, therefore, to my own particular province, which, in generalizing, I may seem to have lost sight of, I may remark that it is sometimes supposed a student cannot attend, advantageously, a surgical course immediately after commencing his medical studies, and before he is well grounded in what are considered certain preparatory branches. This I conceive to be a great mistake; for the principles upon which surgery is founded are so intimately associated with those of most other branches, especially with anatomy, that they necessarily go hand in hand with each other, and cannot well be dissevered, without disadvantage to the pupil. What can be more useful, for example, than to have, immediately after the display of the anatomy of the parts, the diseases of those parts, or the accidents to which they are liable, fully explained in conjunction with the structure, so fresh in the memory? To make this conjunction more valuable, care has been taken that the order of the lectures on



anatomy and surgery should correspond—so that the one precede and the other follow the same day or a few days after. A similar correspondence has been established between the two text books on anatomy and surgery; so that by adopting this system, the youngest pupil will be enabled to attend the surgical course with as much advantage as if he had postponed such attendance until the second year.

Gentlemen—I have now lectured on the principles and practice of surgery, as I have already told you, for thirty years; I have been connected all my life with large hospitals, where I have delivered clinical lectures, prescribed for thousands of patients and performed the most difficult operations; I have walked the rounds of European institutions and become intimate, during two visits abroad, with the most distinguished professional men; I have enjoyed ample opportunities in private of seeing all the varieties and forms of surgical disease, and with my own hand have performed again and again every operation in surgery, from the most simple to the most complicated, from blood letting and tenotomy, up to lithotomy, hernia, aneurism, trepan and cæsarian section and with a result, I trust, which will bear some comparison with that of any of my countrymen and contemporaries. One thing, above all others, I pride myself upon; I have never, under any circumstances, failed to report, faithfully and honestly, the result of my practice and operations, whether favorable or unfavorable; I have never stated any important or marvellous case to the class without giving them proofs of the correctness of my statement, either by referring to persons associated with me, or to other circumstances calculated to fortify my own report—well knowing how prone we all are, to question the correctness of details, no matter how elevated the source whence they proceed, bearing on their surface the stamp of improbability. In walking through Guy's hospital with Sir Astley Cooper, he remarked, "during the first course of surgery I ever delivered, I heard distinctly, one of the pupils say, behind my back, *that is a lie.*" From that moment, he continued, I never failed in stating a case, or any important fact, to refer to the hospital in which it occurred, to the surgeon who

attended with me, or such other authority as would render my statement unquestionable." I make these remarks, not invidiously, but from being well aware, that no teacher can prove eminently useful to his pupils without possessing their entire confidence; that many lecturers from carelessness merely, or from excited imaginations, are apt to indulge in exaggeration, and in attempting to prove how much they have seen and done, have proved too much. A lecturer well known at the South, as a man of some experience and information once said to his class, that he had administered five hundred drops of laudanum to a patient who never before had taken a drop in her life. A long, shrill, whistle, from one of his hearers, immediately resounded through the room, and caused him instantly to exclaim, "I wish I may die, gentlemen, if I have not given under similar circumstances, a thousand drops before now." Greater promptitude of reply could not have been shown by the best editor of the best medical *Lyceum* in the country.

The ordinary limits of an introductory do not admit of my proceeding further upon the present occasion. But, I shall have it in my power, in one or more succeeding lectures, preliminary to the course, to expatiate upon topics which cannot be embraced to day.



